Review of the drinking water crisis

*255. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are planning to review drinking water crisis in the country;

(b) whether Government are aware that the drinking water supplied in villages in some parts of the country is unfit for consumption; and

(c) if so, what are the steps Government is planning to provide quality water in rural areas?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH): (a) The primary responsibility of providing drinking water facilities in the country rests with State Governments. The Union Government has been extending policy, technological and financial support to the States in this endeavour through a Centrally sponsored scheme, namely the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP). The Government of India regularly reviews the status of drinking water supply in all rural habitations of the country. As per the coverage status reported by the States, out of the 14.22 lakh rural habitations in the country included in the Comprehensive Action Plan-1999, 13.67 lakh rural habitations have been fully covered and 50,479 habitations have been partially covered to provide the stipulated quantity of safe drinking water. As coverage status is a dynamic phenomenon, a fresh habitation survey was conducted in 2003 by the States, which is under validation by the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi

(b) As per water quality survey ordered in March, 2000 and conducted by the States, as on 31.3.2004, 2,16,968 rural habitations are affected with drinking water quality problems in terms of excess arsenic, fluoried, iron, salinity, nitrate or combination of these.

(c) Drinking water supply is one of the six components of Bharat Nirman, which has been conceived as a plan for building rural infrastructure. The Plan, *inter-alia*, envisages to ensure provision of safe drinking water to remaining uncovered rural habitations and mitigating water quality problems and coverage of slipped back habitations.